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CIA-RDP85T00875R00170003

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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Memorandum

The Communists' Current Logistic Position in Southern South Vietnam

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ER IM 72-64

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April 1972

Copy No. 63

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
April 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE COMMUNISTS' CURRENT LOGISTIC POSITION IN SOUTHERN SOUTH VIETNAM

Introduction

1. This memorandum assesses the Communists' capability to support increased military activity in South Vietnamese Military Regions (MRs) 3 and 4. Because the enemy's supply effort in these two regions is closely allied with his rear service support system in eastern Cambodia, recent logistic developments there are also discussed. This memorandum complements two recent studies on enemy logistic capabilities in MR 1 and the B-3 Front, respectively.(1)

Conclusions

2. Since mid-1971 the Communists have restructured and upgraded their logistic support apparatus along the Cambodian border adjacent to MRs 3 and 4 and have reoccupied many of the base areas from which they had been driven in 1970. Despite several spoiling operations by ARVN to disrupt these efforts, there is clear evidence that the supply buildup has steadily gained momentum.

3. Currently, the Communists probably have sufficient stocks in place to provide for fairly heavy, sustained action in the provinces

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1. **Logistic Aspects of the Current North Vietnamese Offensive in Northern GVN MR 1**, 5 April 1972, and ER IM 72-56, **Logistic Buildup for a Communist Offensive in the B-3 Front in South Vietnam**, April 1972,

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Note: This memorandum was prepared by OER and coordinated within CIA.

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contiguous to the Cambodian border – particularly in MR 3. Difficulties with the distribution and prepositioning of stocks deep within MRs 3 and 4, however, will continue to impede enemy tactical activity. Furthermore, the success of the Communists' logistics program in the next few months will depend considerably on the level and success of ARVN countermeasures on the ground and the effect of Allied air strikes. The approaching wet season will also slow the effort.

Discussion

Logistics in Perspective: 1970-71

4. The Communist logistic posture in southern South Vietnam has changed dramatically in recent years. Between 1966 and 1970, the Communists sustained a high level of supply deliveries through Cambodia to storage points along the South Vietnam/Cambodia border. However, Sihanouk's ouster in March 1970 and the Allied incursions in May and June into the border base areas cut sharply into the enemy's supply reserves (although roughly 4,000 short tons of arms and ammunition probably remained), and, severely disrupted his rear services command and control apparatus. Between mid-1970 and mid-1971 the Communists in rebuilding their logistic system were forced to intensify self-sufficiency programs by diverting manpower from combat-related to production tasks, and there was a significant increase in reports of supply shortages within southern South Vietnam. These may have been due to the increasing difficulty of moving supplies to enemy units located within South Vietnam, because of the general deterioration in the enemy presence in MRs 3 and 4.

Rebuilding of the System in 1971-72

5. Soon after the Allied cross-border incursions in early summer of 1970, the Communists began to rebuild their crippled rear service support apparatus and to expand their overland resupply corridors between southern Laos and MRs 3 and 4. By early 1971, new rear service groups subordinate to COSVN had been organized and relocated to facilitate an enlarged flow of supplies. Except for the Kratie to O Rang route (see the map), which resumed operations shortly after Allied troops withdrew from Base Area 740, however, secure supply links from the major inland supply depots in Kratie and Kompong Cham Provinces to border area caches opposite MRs 3 and 4 were not in full operation until about mid-1971. Despite several spoiling operations by ARVN to disrupt resupply efforts, this reoccupation and supply buildup has steadily gained momentum. For example, during the height of the ARVN sweep into Svay Rieng Province

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Identified Communist Logistic System

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in March 1972, nightly convoys of enemy trucks carrying ordnance from the Chup area reportedly continued to move supplies destined for the Long An Subregion into temporary storage areas near the MR 3 border.

6. With the large enemy combat force now positioned along the border, the Communist logistic system in eastern Cambodia appears relatively safe at this time from ARVN and/or FANK intrusions. In support of offensive operations in MR 3, the enemy can maintain supply deliveries from rear depots in Kratie, Chup, and Dambe, via Routes 7 and 13, to bases and staging areas along the Cambodia/South Vietnam border.

7. Enemy sanctuaries opposite MR 4 were not as severely disturbed by the 1970 Allied incursions as those farther north. Because of the more remote location of these bases from the key logistic centers in Kratie and Kompong Cham Provinces, however, they are relatively more difficult for the Communists to resupply than those serving MR 3. Some of the supplies in place along the MR 4 border before the incursions were hurriedly relocated by the enemy into Kampot Province (Cambodia) and parts of Kieng Giang Province (South Vietnam) to escape capture. These presumably were used to fill interim requirements in MR 4 and southeastern Cambodia until the new supply corridors could be activated. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Supply Movements Within MRs 3 and 4

8. The Communists since mid-to-late 1971 have been infiltrating supplies from Cambodian border bases to points deep within MRs 3 and 4. Although the shipments, [redacted], 25X1 have individually been small – usually less than 10 tons – they do indicate a regular use by the enemy of supply corridors within southern South Vietnam.

9. In MR 3, three separate logistics corridors have been identified. Each route closely parallels a major South Vietnam waterway and leads into one of the Communist military subregions around Saigon: (1) the Saigon River corridor, running along the Tay Ninh/Binh Long Province border into Binh Duong Province and Subregion 1 north of Saigon; (2) the Vam Co Tay River corridor to the west flows along the border of MRs 3 and 4 and connects Svay Rieng Province in Cambodia with the Long An Subregion west of Saigon; and (3) the Song Be River corridor, extending from Kratie Province in Cambodia along the Binh Long/Phuoc Long

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Province border into the Thu Bien Subregion northeast of Saigon. The enemy in addition uses smaller waterways and trails to infiltrate supplies into MR 3.

10. Reports of supply flows within MR 4 indicate that they have been largely – though not wholly – concentrated in the northeastern part of the region. This area is apparently supplied by two major logistics corridors, one following tributaries of the Mekong River east from the border. The other extending along the Kien Phong/Kien Tuong provincial boundary into Base Area 470. Regular use of the Mekong corridor has been noted since last November. According to prisoners-of-war who had participated in supply movements along this route until their capture early this year, sampans loaded with small arms, ammunition, and explosives regularly traveled from the border into Kien Hoa and Dinh Tuong Provinces. Some supplies moved into Base Area 470 are reportedly moved farther south to storage depots ("secret zones") along the coast. These goods are then distributed throughout the lower Delta. More than 15 reports of such transshipment activities have been received thus far in 1972.

11. Communist forces in MR 4 may also be satisfying part of their resupply requirements from seaborne deliveries. Although it is unlikely that any of the 17 detected attempts by steel-hulled trawlers at supply infiltration this dry season were successful – the last known successful attempt occurred in late 1970 or early 1971 – recent reporting indicates that some supplies are being moved from Cambodia into Kien Giang Province on the west coast of South Vietnam. Thus far this year, several reports have been received indicating coastal infiltration by the enemy to the U Minh Forest area in southern Kien Giang. The reports indicate that 5-ton to 15-ton fishing vessels offload supplies to motorized sampans, which carry the goods to coastal waterways. this is the area of operations of a Viet Cong Transportation Group which reportedly receives coastal shipments originating from the Kep mountain area of Kampot Province, Cambodia, and also operates an ove land transportation route extending to the U Minh area from the same source. 25X1

Flows, Requirements, and Capabilities

12. Between October 1971 and April 1972, the enemy delivered about 3,300-5,200 tons of weapons, ammunition, and equipment into Cambodia out of southern Laos.(2) As much as 2,200 tons may have been required to meet requirements in Cambodia, the residual (1,100-3,000 tons) being available for satisfying requirements in MRS 3 and 4. Resupply

2. This range, should be viewed as a rough order of magnitude and not as a precise estimate. 25X1

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requirements for these military regions during that period amounted to a minimum of 700 tons. If the enemy were operating from the high end of the remaining tonnage and were able to successfully preposition these supplies, he would technically be in a position to sustain major operations in both MRs 3 and 4; if at the low end of the range, he probably could meet MR 3 requirements for sustained offensive action but probably would be unable to support fighting in MR 4 much above the present level of activity there. In either case, the distribution and prepositioning of these stocks within MRs 3 and 4 by a logistics infrastructure which is much weaker than in MRs 1 and 2 will continue to be an impediment to enemy tactical activity in the foreseeable future. ARVN countermeasures, Allied air strikes, and the approaching wet season may also pose hurdles to Communist tactical success in these areas in coming weeks.

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